

THE ARTS and PUBLIC POLICY in the UNITED STATES

THE SIXTY-SEVENTH AMERICAN ASSEMBLY
MAY 31–JUNE 3, 1984

ARDEN HOUSE, HARRIMAN, N.Y.

The American Assembly
Columbia University

The volume *The Arts and Public Policy in the United States* (editor, W. McNeil Lowry), containing the chapters described on the next page, will appear in public print in the fall of 1984 and may be ordered from the publisher: Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. The telephone number is (201) 767-9520.

PREFACE

On May 31, 1984, fifty-six men and women, drawn from the performing, graphic, plastic, and literary arts; from artistic direction and administration; and from government, the universities, business, foundations, associations, critics, and patrons of the arts gathered at Arden House in Harriman, New York, for the Sixty-seventh American Assembly on *The Arts and Public Policy in the United States* for three days. The participants discussed the nature of public policy toward the arts in the United States, influences on that policy, vehicles for support of the arts, and the probable future of public policy.

W. McNeil Lowry, formerly of The Ford Foundation, acted as director for this Assembly program and supervised the preparation of papers that were used as background reading by the participants. Authors and titles of the papers which will be compiled and published as a Prentice-Hall book entitled *The Arts and Public Policy in the United States* are:

W. McNeil Lowry	<i>Introduction</i>
Stanley N. Katz	<i>Influences on Public Policies in the United States</i>
Perry T. Rathbone	<i>Influences of Private Patrons: The Art Museum as an Example</i>
Paul J. DiMaggio	<i>The Nonprofit Instrument and the Influence of the Marketplace on Policies in the Arts</i>
A Symposium	<i>Issues in the Emergence of Public Policy</i>
W. McNeil Lowry	<i>Conclusion</i>

Speakers during the Assembly were Dr. Howard Johnson, chairman emeritus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Mr. Phillip Johnson, partner with John Burgee Architects. The Honorable Sidney R. Yates, United States Representative from Illinois, sent a message which was read to the participants by Mr. Lowry.

On June 3, 1984, following their discussion, the participants produced this report, which contains both assessments and recommendations. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of The Ford Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, The L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, and The New York Community Trust, who helped sponsor this Assembly. They and The American Assembly, a national, nonpartisan, educational institution, have taken no stands on the subjects that were presented for public discussion. The participants spoke for themselves rather than for the institutions with which they are affiliated.

William H. Sullivan
President
The American Assembly

FINAL REPORT
of the
SIXTY-SEVENTH AMERICAN ASSEMBLY

At the close of their discussions the participants in the Sixty-seventh American Assembly, on *The Arts and Public Policy in the United States*, at Arden House, Harriman, New York, May 31-June 3, 1984, reviewed as a group the following statement. This statement represents general agreement; however, no one was asked to sign it. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to every recommendation.

PREAMBLE

The arts have been moving toward a more central place in our national priorities. Some significant steps remain to be taken before this goal is fully realized. The people of the United States—and not merely the artists and the institutions in the arts—need a more clearly understood public policy. American artists, in their role as citizens, may have no more urgent mission than to take leadership in analyzing and expressing that policy.

Public policy in the arts has its roots deep in our history. These roots are found in a mix of private and public influences coming from the artists themselves, from the voluntary societies they use as instruments, and from the sources of patronage—private individuals, foundations, corporations, and now three levels of government.

The participants in this Sixty-seventh American Assembly—artists, managers, official and lay leaders—find this mix of private and public influences desirable. It encourages the great diversity of the arts in a large and complex country. It provides for the decentralization of judgment, choice, and expression. It makes possible development of the new and the experimen-

tal. The more we have examined them, the more plainly do our country's policies in the arts reflect the pluralism and diversity in which our society evolved.

In the diverse sources of patronage in the arts, we find also the best protection from the possibility of outside interference or control. We continue, therefore, to be heartened by the many voices in the society giving increased attention to the artists and to the needs of artistic organizations and groups. Clear public understanding of the central place of the arts is more important than any official national policy or any predetermined ratios in the mix of private and public support.

There are many reasons for this view. The United States is a long way from reaching the limits of private or public patronage. Greater support must be motivated by the needs inherent in the artistic process and by the financial needs of artists and of institutions. An increasing tendency in arts institutions and funding sources to rely upon earned income to bridge the gap between income and expenses risks compromising the artistic process.

The arts constitute one of America's great underused and vital resources. The insight and inspiration that our composers and musicians, our poets and novelists, our playwrights and actors, our choreographers and dancers, our painters, sculptors, architects, and photographers, our media artists, and others provide in our society are only a fraction of what would be possible if sufficient means were available.

Sources of funding for the arts inevitably exert considerable influence in the formation of a public policy on the arts. The nature and extent of support from governmental units, foundations, corporations, and private patrons help determine public awareness of and participation in the arts. But other influences are equally important: the attitudes of national leaders, the extent and quality of media attention, the values underlying the educational system, and the dynamics of the marketplace.

The most important of all influences on policy begins with the artistic impulse itself. The arts function in the national interest as a recorder of history and experience and as a force illuminating the human condition. The participants in this Sixty-seventh Assembly give conscious weight to the social, political, and economic uses of the arts, but we find the greatest priority in the intrinsic value of art itself.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We view with admiration the European traditions of funding in which governments have historically made strong public commitments to the arts, but as the arts in the United States have matured we find that the dynamic relationship between public and private funding sources is more suited for the development of creativity and talent throughout our own diverse and plural society.

2. One of the keys to public policy in the arts is in the hands of the daily and periodical press and particularly the large urban newspapers widely syndicated across the country. The growing tendency for even the most noted of these to treat the arts predominantly as “entertainment,” “leisure,” or “style” often inhibits any real insight into the primary questions of private or public policy or even questions of the development of careers of artists.

3. Appreciation of the arts is by and large developed through the educational system. The beginnings of attitudes and opinions about the importance of the arts have the same locus. We cannot hope to establish the centrality of the arts to this society or their value to the individual without a clear recognition of this fact. More support for the arts in education is needed, especially at the local level.

4. The goal of universal access to and availability of the arts is an essential component of a public policy in the arts. We

recommend that, whenever feasible, lower admission prices, more even distribution of arts facilities, and greater recognition of minority art forms all be encouraged.

5. The mechanism of the nonprofit corporation remains today, as it has for seven decades, inseparable from the institutional life of the arts in this country. It is grounded in the recognition by federal and state governments that art as an exercise in aesthetic inquiry, performance, and exhibition is inherently deserving of tax exemption. In the life of nonprofit arts organizations, the “bottom line” should be defined as the value placed on the quality of the artistic experience.

6. We have recognized that the artist must be more central in the formulation of public policy in the arts. To equip the artist and other spokespersons with information for this increased role, the arts service organizations should be encouraged to provide facts, figures, and information about government, foundation, and corporate programs.

7. The federal government has expressed its commitment to the arts in the law establishing the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities. It is recommended that the ideas contained in that document be extended to a broad range of federal agencies for valuable social, educational, and economic programs involving the arts.

8. While recognizing the critical importance of autonomy and diversity in the philanthropic programs of private and corporate foundations, we are hopeful that more systematic exchanges of information can help to guide their actions.

9. The efficient management of the nonprofit organization must not divert its artistic objective, which must remain the province of the artistic director. An understanding of the fiduciary responsibilities of the trustees is essential for the director and artistic personnel, while genuine sensitivity to the creative goals of the artists on the part of the trustees is absolutely vital. It is urgent that each element of the organization guard

against the erosion of high quality of performance and the integrity of the artistic process. A collaborative relationship in the structure allows for growth and development of the art to which the institution as a whole is devoted.

10. We are only beginning to experience the range of forms and shapes in which sight and sound can be electronically delivered. We hope that artists, managers, and other sources of policy in the arts will take the utmost advantage of the radical changes in the media and in new information systems. But of equal importance is the imperative need to support the primacy of direct access to live performing and exhibiting spaces.

11. Public television and radio are prime sources of dissemination of the arts. They also advance the art of the media themselves. If they are to survive, the government must assist in their support. We recommend speedy restoration of federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). We also encourage an emphasis on regional programing.

12. A fairly common deficiency of arts groups is the absence of a clear statement of purpose and a long view, both artistically and financially. Planning is an important function, but too often financial planning by trustees and managers extends only to the annual rush to close the earnings gap. A more appropriate focus would be multiyear budgets and long-range plans for both arts organizations and funding sources.

13. The record of the National Endowment for the Arts and of state arts agencies in avoiding political interference in funding decisions has been good. Recent incidents, however, remind us that constant vigilance on this point is necessary to discourage any interference, especially in the support of artists and of artistic groups presenting art with social or political content.

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ABOUT THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY

The American Assembly was established by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Columbia University in 1950. It holds nonpartisan meetings and publishes authoritative books to illuminate issues of United States policy.

An affiliate of Columbia, with offices in the Sherman Fairchild Center, the Assembly is a national, educational institution incorporated in the State of New York.

The Assembly seeks to provide information, stimulate discussion, and evoke independent conclusions on matters of vital public interest.

American Assembly Sessions

At least two national programs are initiated each year. Authorities are retained to write background papers presenting essential data and defining the main issues of each subject.

A group of men and women representing a broad range of experience, competence, and American leadership meet for several days to discuss the Assembly topic and consider alternatives for national policy.

All Assemblies follow the same procedure. The background papers are sent to participants in advance of the Assembly. The Assembly meets in small groups for four or five lengthy periods. All groups use the same agenda. At the close of these informal sessions participants adopt in plenary session a final report of findings and recommendations.

Regional, state, and local Assemblies are held following the national session at Arden House. Assemblies have also been held in England, Switzerland, Malaysia, Canada, the Caribbean, South America, Central America, the Philippines, and Japan. Over one hundred forty institutions have cosponsored one or more Assemblies.

Arden House

Home of The American Assembly and scene of the national sessions is Arden House, which was given to Columbia University in 1950 by W. Averell Harriman. E. Roland Harriman joined his brother in contributing toward adaptation of the property for conference purposes. The buildings and surrounding land, known as the Harriman Campus of Columbia University, are fifty miles north of New York City.

Arden House is a distinguished conference center. It is self-supporting and operates throughout the year for use by organizations with educational objectives. The American Assembly is a tenant of this Columbia University facility only during Assembly sessions.

AMERICAN ASSEMBLY BOOKS

- 1951—U.S.-Western Europe Relationships
- 1952—Inflation
- 1953—Economic Security for Americans
- 1954—The U.S. Stake in the U.N. • The Federal Government Service (revised 1965)
- 1955—United States Agriculture • The Forty-eight States (State Government)
- 1956—The Representation of the United States Abroad (revised 1964)
 - The United States and the Far East (revised 1962)
- 1957—International Stability and Progress • Atoms for Power
- 1958—The United States and Africa (revised 1963)
 - United States Monetary Policy (revised 1964)
- 1959—Wages, Prices, Profits, and Productivity
 - The United States and Latin America (revised 1963)
- 1960—The Federal Government and Higher Education • The Secretary of State
- 1961—Arms Control: Issues for the Public
 - Outer Space: Prospects for Man and Society (revised 1968)
- 1962—Automation and Technological Change
 - Cultural Affairs and Foreign Relations (revised 1968)
- 1963—The Population Dilemma (revised 1969) • The United States and the Middle East
- 1964—The United States and Canada • The Congress and America's Future (revised 1973)
- 1965—The Courts, the Public, and the Law Explosion
 - The United States and Japan (revised 1975)
- 1966—The United States and the Philippines • State Legislatures in American Politics
 - A World of Nuclear Powers? • Challenges to Collective Bargaining
- 1967—The United States and Eastern Europe • Ombudsmen for American Government?
- 1968—Law in a Changing America • Uses of the Seas • Overcoming World Hunger
- 1969—Black Economic Development • The States and the Urban Crisis
- 1970—The Health of Americans • The United States and the Caribbean
- 1971—The Future of American Transportation • Public Workers and Public Unions
- 1972—The Future of Foundations • Prisoners in America
- 1973—The Worker and the Job • Choosing the President
- 1974—The Good Earth of America • On Understanding Art Museums
 - Global Companies
- 1975—Law and the American Future • Women and the American Economy
- 1976—The Nuclear Power Controversy
 - Jobs for Americans
 - Capital for Productivity and Jobs
- 1977—Ethics of Corporate Conduct
 - The Performing Arts and American Society
- 1978—Running the American Corporation
 - Race for the Presidency
- 1979—Energy Conservation and Public Policy
 - Disorders in Higher Education
- 1980—Youth Employment and Public Policy
 - The Economy and the President
 - The Farm and the City
 - Mexico and the United States
- 1981—The China Factor
 - Military Service in the United States
 - Ethnic Relations in America
- 1982—The Future of American Political Parties
 - Regrowing the American Economy
- 1983—Financial Services
 - Technological Innovation in the Eighties
- 1984—Alcoholism and Related Problems
 - The Arts and Public Policy in the United States
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